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The Traditional Element in Faulkner

JOHN C. SHERWOOD

To a reader without extensive literary training the novels of William Faulkner would undoubtedly appear modern in the most unpleasant meaning of the term. The melancholy, the brutality, the preoccupation with the most unpleasant aspects of sex and psychology are all things which the average reader connects with the fiction of our own time. On the other hand, some of Faulkner's admirers and defenders think of him as a traditionalist, at least with respect to the moral and political attitudes which appear in the novels of the forties and the late thirties. This traditional element unquestionably exists, and it is to be found not only in the ideas, but in a place where we would hardly expect to find it—in his themes and plots, many of which are of a kind common enough in the literature of our ancestors, but almost entirely abandoned in genuine literature today. That there is something of an older manner in Faulkner's story telling has not gone unnoticed, for *Absalom, Absalom!* has been exhaustively analyzed as a Gothic novel. But *Absalom* is not the only novel of his to show this archaic quality, nor is the Gothic novel the only literary type to which Faulkner's work can be compared. Perhaps the best way to begin would be to mention some of the situation in Faulkner's novels that seem most dated and to suggest something of the literary history that lies behind them.

There is, for instance, the theme of incest. We can certainly interpret a writer's interest in this disagreeable topic in Freudian terms, either by tracing it back to something in his own emotional life or by regarding it simply as another instance of the influence on literature of modern discoveries in psychology. At the same time we ought to remember that incest has been a common theme in literature from the Greeks on down. The incest, actual or contemplated, of brother and sister, which appears in *Absalom* and *The Sound and the Fury*, is especially

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common; it is in Dryden's *Spanish Friar*, in Fletcher's *A King and No King* and Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, in Byron's *Manfred* and *Bride of Abydos*, in *Joseph Andrews*, and in at least two plays of Plautus, to give a mere sampling. (In several of these, as in Faulkner, no actual incest takes place; often the parties concerned out not to be related after all, and the end is happy.) The possibility of incest between stepmother and stepson, hinted at in *The Unvanquished*, is known to literature and legend through the stories of Phaedra (Euripides, Seneca, Racine, Gide) and Don Carlos (Otway, Alfieri, Schiller, Verdi); while the incest of father and daughter, which appears in *The Bear*, turns up in the Bible (Lot), in Greek mythology (Myrrha), and in Shakespeare (*Pericles, Prince of Tyre*). What is especially archaic and un-Freudian, since there is no psychological motivation, is Faulkner's use of innocent and accidental incest, in which one or both parties are unaware that there is any family relationship. This is the form which the plot takes in several of the works listed above, and it is the form that it takes in *Absalom, Absalom!* and (one would judge) in *The Bear*, though in the latter case the details are obscure.

In *Absalom, Absalom!* the theme of incest becomes involved, as in *Oedipus Rex* and several of the other works mentioned, with an equally venerable theme, that of the lost child. As traditionally developed, this plot deals with a child who has been separated from his natural parents in infancy and who discovers his real relations at some crisis in his life, with results that are usually either extremely happy or extremely sad. (Of course a mere story of orphanage or illegitimacy would not come under this heading, unless there were some mystery about the actual parentage and some importance attached to solving the mystery; James's *The Princess Cassimassima* would not be listed here nor the story of Januarius Jones in *Soldier's Pay*.) In such works as *Oedipus Rex*, or

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Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity*, or *Il Trovatore* the end is tragic; in Euripides' *Ion*, in *Daphnis and Choe*, in *Cymbeline* and *A Winter's Tale* and a host of other romantic novels and plays the end is happy—the lost one gets a wife, or a throne, or a fortune as the result of the discovery of his real identity. The unhappy variation of this plot is used by Faulkner not only in the Gothic *Absalom* but also in *Light in August*, *The Fable*, and the short story "Tomorrow." The first shows the theme in its usual form, while *Light in August* and *The Fable* are farther from the tradition, since in neither case does the reunion, however striking or unexpected, really affect the catastrophe. "Tomorrow" follows the type even less closely, since there is really no question of identity; but the coincidence which brings the father and the killer of his adopted child into contact after so many years is much in the manner of these tales. Here, as in *Light in August* and *The Fable*, the reunion comes in connection with a criminal trial; this is an old device, used in the seventh story of the fifth day of the *Decameron*, in *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. In Mark Twain's novel the story of the lost child becomes entangled with the problem of miscegenation, as it is in G. W. Cable's *Madame Delphine*, and in *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* In all these cases something more is involved than the mere desire to be sensational; the device of the lost child lends itself very well to ironical comment on race relations and the institution of slavery. This does not, of course, make the situation any more probable.

There are other themes and situations in Faulkner which have an archaic tinge. There is, for instance, the theme of buried treasure (*The Hamlet*, "The Fire and the Hearth" in *Go Down Moses*), which recalls all sorts of stories from *Beowulf* and *The Pardoner's Tale* down to Poe and Stevenson. There is the tale of trickery, and especially of the "tricker-tricked" (*The Hamlet*; "All the Young Pilots," "The Bear Hunt," "Centaur in Brass"); this may be a matter of frontier humor, but the type is immemorial, as witness *Ali Baba*, *The Miller's Tale*, and many stories in the *Decameron*. Finally there is that most romantic and improbable of all romantic and improbable situations, the beautiful girl who goes around in men's clothing; Shakespeare and Fletcher made much of this, and Byron and Dumas employ it, but it is a little surprising to find it revived today, even if, as in the case of Drusilla, the girl is not quite so beautiful or feminine as Viola or Rosalind, and no real deception is involved.

All of these plots have a considerable value as entertainment, as their persistent use would certainly show; and yet, somehow, they seem inappropriate for a modern novelist. It is not that such events are absolutely impossible. Buried treasure is occasionally uncovered; women have managed to fight wars in male disguise; practical jokes are played. Children do get lost and found again, especially in times of war and disturbance; there were plenty of such cases on the frontier during the Indian wars, and if we want a Southern example, there is Salome Muller, an orphan of German immigrant stock who was passed off as a "yaller girl" and kept in slavery for twenty years before she was found and rescued by relatives. Such things can happen, and yet as themes for modern fiction they have all the air of Aristotle's improbable possibilities. In some cases the themes strike us as belonging to a different stage of social development. In ancient Greece, what with slavery, piracy, and exposure of unwanted infants, children even of important people probably did get mislaid now and then; and, before the times of banks and police, the burial of valuable property was a common practice. Even so it is doubtful if life ever presented so many cases of children lost and found in curious and interesting ways as literature does; and, if we were to examine the lives of lady warriors, we would probably find that most of them were like the Mexican woman mentioned by Mrs. Custer, whose deception was improved by the fact that she had the beginnings of a mustache. Moreover, if the scene is no longer ancient Greece, but modern or even nineteenth-century America, then the improbability is even stronger. Finally, even if we managed to justify one of these themes by itself, we would be hard put to justify the combination of several. A child may disappear, but it is hardly likely that he will reappear as his sister's suitor, or that his grandfather will turn up to persecute him, or that his former guardian will find himself a jurymen at his murderer's trial. Miscegenation is a natural theme for a Southern writer, but miscegenation mixed with incest and lost children goes beyond the realm of realistic fiction into romance and folklore.

Of course it is possible to find a scattering of relatively modern and relatively realistic works in which similar combinations of improbable situations are used. Even the intermingling of incest and lost children can be found in such unlikely authors as Ibsen and Shaw. But if we turn to the actual works concerned—*Ghosts* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*—we shall find an atmosphere and treatment quite different from Faulkner's. In Shaw's play the whole matter is not of any great

consequence; the lovers are probably not really brother and sister, and the affair is never going to be consummated anyway, for reasons having nothing to do with incest. In Ibsen the theme is treated more seriously, but without the excessive use of coincidence that is typical of older treatments of the theme, or of Faulkner's. Given the original circumstances of Regina's birth, it is not particularly strange that she should be part of the Alving household or that Oswald should come into contact with her. Her parentage is really not much of a mystery anyway, and as soon as the possibility of an affair becomes evident, the proper revelation is made. If these examples serve any purpose in our discussion of Faulkner, it will be to show that he is nearer to the older and more sensational treatments of the situation than to the relatively few works of this kind at the respectable levels of modern literature.

It is necessary to specify the respectable levels of literature here because most of these themes are still fairly popular at sub-literary levels. Lost children abound in the comic strips; Little Orphan Annie remains permanently lost, but Hot Rod Happy (in *Smilin' Jack*) and Drift (in Steve Roper) wandered back to their rich relatives, and Casey Ruggles, in the strip of that name, came close to marrying his sister. Even science fiction is not free from these plots; there is one story of a robot hopelessly in love with a human being, where the happy ending is produced by the discovery that the girl is a robot also (they marry and send off to the factory for offspring), and another in which the hero nearly loses his love because he is not alert enough to deduce, from her possession of a navel, that she is human and not one of the man-like (and girl-like) reptiles who have brought her up. To go back a little in time, the old melodrama used such plots; Thomas Wolfe has an amusing account of a journalist in the Harvard drama class who tried to perpetuate the type in defiance of all the trends in the modern theater:

He wrote, without effort and with unerring accuracy, a kind of play which had been immensely popular at the beginning of the twentieth century, but which people had grown tired of twenty years before. He wrote plays in which babies got mixed up in the maternity ward of a great hospital, in which the rich man's child goes to the family of the little grocer, and the grocer's child grows up as the heir to an enormous fortune, with all the luxuries and securities of wealth around him. And he brought about the final resolution of this tangled scheme, the meeting of these scrambled children and their bewildered parents, with a skill of complication, a design of plot, a dexterity that was astonishing He had mastered the formula of the older type of "well-

made play" with astonishing success. Only the type was dead, the interest of the public in such plays had vanished twenty years before.

Faulkner has pursued one sub-literary type in the mystery story, and it is interesting to see him approaching the spirit of others even in his most serious works.

It is still necessary to explain why we should be suspicious of something in Faulkner which we accept and enjoy in Shakespeare and Dickens and which unintellectual readers find entertaining in the comic strip. After all, until the coming of naturalism, it was assumed that although art was meant to imitate life it was not meant to imitate it in a literal or uninspired way, but to heighten and color it in order to make it interesting. As Dryden says of Jonson:

In *Bartholomew Fair*, or the lowest kind of comedy, that degree of heightening is used, which is proper to set off that subject: it is true the author was not there to go out of prose, as he does in his higher arguments of Comedy, *The Fox* and *Alchymist*; yet he does so raise his matter in that prose, as to render it delightful; which he could never have performed, had he only said or done those very things, that are daily spoken or practised in the fair: for then the fair itself would be as full of pleasure to an ingenious person as the play, which we manifestly see it is not.

This doctrine does not entirely justify Faulkner, however. What we actually have in him is not heightened realism, but an imperfectly fused mixture of the grossest naturalism with the most sensational kind of romance. It is the same incongruity that George Moore found in much of the fiction of the end of the nineteenth century, "the regular and inevitable alteration and combination of pa and ma, and dear Annie who lives at Clapham, with the Mountains of the Moon, and the secret of eternal life." In such a novel as *Oliver Twist* the incongruity is not so noticeable, because there is an overall atmosphere of excitement and romance into which the sensational episodes fit conveniently and we forget that a middle-class boy is being put through adventures formerly reserved for kings and nobles. *Absalom Absalom!* has something of this atmosphere, though perhaps not enough, but *Light in August* has none of it and presents an odd mixture of the commonplace and the extraordinary, of Steinbeck and Shakespeare.

There is one more thing to be said. Though the mixture of the Gothic and the naturalistic is certainly hard to justify according to any critical standards, it is not really so surprising to find the two together. Though there is no real justification for it, the naturalist has always

shown a predilection for low life and has always been in danger of confounding the real with the sordid and disagreeable. Originally this was a matter of honesty—an obligation was felt to open up areas shunned by the genteel novelist—but lately it has become a mere habit. Now the sordid has always had a tendency to slide into the sensational. The more violent episodes of *l'Assomoir* or *Studs Lonigan* might not seem very strange or interesting or extraordinary to a person accustomed to the life described in the novels, but to the sheltered middle-class reader (for whom after all such things are written) their interest certainly does not arise from the pleasure that Aristotle describes, the pleasure of recognizing an accurate imitation. The pleasure, if we may call it pleasure, is the pleasure of shock, surprise, and sometimes horror—the same pleasure, doubtless, that we get from an account of accidental incest. The bawny scene at the end of *Grapes of Wrath* may not be as contrived as the episodes of *Absalom*, but its effect is the same. Faulkner, of course, is just as much addicted to the naturalistic kind of sensationalism as the Gothic; he has a natural aptitude for both, and *Sanctuary* is the product of the same mind that produced *Absalom*.

Thus the wheel has come full circle. In its beginnings naturalism was, among other things, a reaction against the preference in fiction for the odd, the strange, the sensational, and the contrived. In its latter end it has resorted to the use of situations whose final effect on the reader is very much like the effect of all that it protested against. So nearly allied have the two tendencies become, in fact, that we can find them alternated and intermingled in a writer like Faulkner. This is not to say, however, that they go well together; logically and rationally they do not belong with one another. Faulkner's archaic plots are a little odd and surprising in themselves; used in conjunction with the grosser kinds of realism, that can only be regarded as a serious weakness.

Univ. of Oregon

Faulkner's Poetry

HARRY RUNYAN

Not long after his twentieth book of fiction was published William Faulkner remarked: "I am happy to be a novelist, but I would like to be a poet. In fact, I am a frustrated poet." Earlier he had said: "When I found poetry was not suited to what I had to say, I changed my medium . . . I use a poetic quality in my writing. After all, prose is poetry."

One has no cause to doubt the truth of these statements. Faulkner had begun his literary life as a poet. His first three published pieces were poems. His first published volume was a long poem. And he had published three more poems before his first novel, *Soldier's Pay*, appeared. The rest of his verse did not see print until 1932 and 1933, and since that time there has been no more. Faulkner was twenty-two when his first poems appeared, and thirty-six when the last of his poems were published. He once said that the best age for writing poetry is from seventeen to twenty-six, and that he quit writing poetry at the age of twenty-three. His verse is undoubtedly all early work. Although it was not published until 1924, the text of *The Marble Faun* is dated April, May, June, 1919. And as early as February 1925 *A Green Bough* (then called *The Greening Bough*) was announced. Its non-publication at that time was probably due to the poor reception of *The Marble Faun* the year previous, and its eventual appearance to the hope that it would succeed as a book by the then famed author of *Sanctuary*. A further indication that Faulkner's verse is the work of a beginning writer is its almost wholly derivative nature. Both Phil Stone, in his preface to *The Marble Faun*, and Paul Romaine, in his preface to *Salmagundi*, stress the point that the two books are the product of youth.

Faulkner's extant poetry consists of fifty-six pieces, all published between the years 1919 and 1933. Forty-nine of the fifty-six have been collected between the covers of three books; the other seven remain fugitive. One of the books—*The Marble Faun* (1924)—can be described briefly: it is a single poem, 806 lines long, a kind of pastoral "Seasons" using conventional metrics and stereotyped imagery. It has a further distinction in being Faulkner's first published book. *Salmagundi* (1932), which contains five poems and three essays, collects all but one poem of Faulkner's magazine verse published before 1932. It includes his first published writing of any kind—"L'Après-midi d'un Faune"—originally printed in the August 6, 1919, *New Republic*; his third published piece—"Portrait"—from the June 1922 *Double Dealer*; and three poems from the Jan.-Feb., April, and June 1925 issues of the *Double Dealer*—"Dying Gladiator," "The Faun," and "The Lilacs." Faulkner's second published poem, a sonnet called "To a Co-ed," appeared in *Ole Miss*, the University of Mississippi yearbook for 1919-1920. It has not been collected, but it was reprinted by Louis Cochran in an article about Faulkner in the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* for Nov. 6, 1932. Cochran there called it Faulkner's "first work."

The five poems in *Salmagundi* had all appeared in magazines by 1925. Between that time and 1932 no verse of Faulkner's was published. Then in 1932, *Contempo*, a newspaper-type little magazine published by Anthony Buttitta at Chapel Hill, devoted its entire February 1 issue to Faulkner. Besides an uncollected short story called "Once Aboard the Lugger," the issue contained nine poems of Faulkner's, all published there for the first time. Five of the nine were later reprinted, with revisions, in *A Green Bough* (1933). One of them, an eight-line piece called "My Epitaph" in its original publication, was reprinted the same year in pamphlet form under the title "This Earth." It later became the last poem in *A Green Bough*. The four poems not reprinted in *A Green Bough* are uncollected. In the May 25, 1932, issue of *Contempo* another poem, called "A Child Looks from His Window," appeared, and a year later, on June 25, 1933, another called "The Flowers That Died," was published in the same magazine. Both poems are uncollected. Meanwhile the April 12, 1933, *New Republic* contained four Faulkner poems, and the April 19 and May 3 issues had one each. All six of these poems were reprinted in *A Green Bough*.

With the single exception of the sonnet in *Ole Miss*, all of Faulkner's magazine verse appeared in the *New Republic*, the *Double Dealer*, and *Contempo*. All seven from the *New Republic* and all four from the *Double Dealer* have been collected in either *Salmagundi* or *A Green Bough*. Of the eleven printed in *Contempo* five appear in *A Green Bough*. Altogether, there are forty-four poems in *A Green Bough*. Thirty-two of them were new to the volume; the other twelve consist of six from the *New Republic*, five out of the nine from the February 1, 1932 issue of *Contempo* (including "My Epitaph" or "This Earth"), and one—"The Lilacs"—from the June 1925 *Double Dealer*, it having already been reprinted in *Salmagundi*. None of the poems in *A Green Bough* have titles, even though the twelve reprinted ones were given titles in the original publication. And in 1934 when seven of Faulkner's poems from that book were reprinted in an anthology called *Mississippi Verse*, they were given titles. "The Lilacs" and the poems first published in 1932 were reprinted in *A Green Bough* with a number of verbal changes, while the 1933 poems were transferred unrevised.

Most of Faulkner's poetry is either nature poetry or love poetry, and often the nature poetry is presented in sexual imagery and the love poetry in nature imagery. One poem, for example, originally entitled

"Spring," presents the wind as a stallion and the trees as the mare he has raped. Another, called "April," speaks of the wind caressing and kissing the populars. Still another describes the coming of winter as a courtesan dead. Elsewhere, in a poem called "To a Virgin," the girl is pictured in the metaphor of a tree, in another the loss of love is compared with autumn, and in another the poet sees his loved one as a flower. There is a pastoral element in a number of the poems, and fauns and satyrs, shepherds and shepherdesses romp across scenes of fixed nature.

As for theme, mutability—with the everpresent sense of futility—dominates the atmosphere. Faulkner's poetry is "Waste Land" poetry, presented in a *fin de siècle* manner. Swinburne and Housman, the former to provide sensuousness, the latter to provide temper, seem to be the chief models. And in Faulkner's essay on poetry it was Swinburne, he said, who "discovered" him, and made him his slave. This occurred when Faulkner was sixteen. Then he went through a period of reading his contemporaries, after which the discovery of *The Shropshire Lad* "closed the period." There are several poems in *A Green Bough* which are directly derivative of Housman. And Housman's pseudo-pastoral poetry quite possibly provided the stimulus for Faulkner's own pastoral predilections. The Housman influence, for example, is obvious in the following lines:

When evening shadows grew around
And a thin moon filled the lane,
Their slowing breath made scarce a sound
Where Richard lay with Jane.

(*A Green Bough*, XI)

When I was young and proud and gay
And flowers in fields were thickening,
There was Tad and Ralph and Ray
All waiting for my picking.

(*A Green Bough*, XIII)

Mankind called him felon
And hanged him stark and high
Where four winds could watch him
Troubled on the sky.

(*A Green Bough*, XIV)

The sonnet, "To a Co-ed," with its picture of the girl's throat, is reminiscent of Rossetti, and the line, "The twilit hidden stillness of your eyes," may be compared with "Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies," from Rossetti's Sonnet IV, "Lovesight." Three poems in *A Green Bough* (IV, XVII, and XXXII) are printed in lower case, and the first has such other typographical idiosyncrasies as running words together and the brutal oxymoronic juxtapositions characteristic of E. E. Cummings. The influence of T. S. Eliot is more pervasive, but one can find reminiscences of "Prufrock" in:

We sit drinking tea
 Beneath the lilacs on a summer afternoon
 Comfortably at our ease
 With fresh linen on our knees . . .
 (*A Green Bough*, I)

and echoes of "Sweeney" in:

The Raven bleak and Philomel
 Amid the bleeding trees were fixed.
 His hoarse cry and hers were mixed
 And through the dark their droppings fell . . .
 (*A Green Bough*, XXVII)

The structure of the poems varies from highly flexible free verse through modified metrical forms to strict stanzaic patterns. The longer poems tend to fall into iambic pentameter, sometimes irregularly rhymed, sometimes in blank verse. There are a number of sonnets, generally a modified Italian. The shorter poems are frequently iambic tetrameter, rhymed, quite obviously Housmanesque. Most of the poems are conventional metrically. One of the points Faulkner made in his essay on poetry was that recently (i. e., around 1925) he was beginning to find among poets "a tendency . . . to revert to formal rhymes and conventional forms again," a tendency which he approved. References to such conventionally poetical characters as Cynthia, Jove, Caia, Atthis, and Roland, and diction liberally sprinkled with "thee" and "thou" and "ere" and "mid" and "'twas" and "twain," all suggest a throwback to an outmoded practice which sometimes coincides with and sometimes conflicts with the poetic statement. The final effect is one of immature romanticism,

Following is a list of the magazine appearance of individual poems:

1. "L'Après-midi d'un Faune." *The New Republic*, XX (Aug. 6, 1919), 24 [reprinted in *Salmagundi*].
2. "To a Co-ed." *Ole Miss* (Yearbook of the University of Mississippi, 1919-1920), p. 174 [reprinted in the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 6, 1932, Magazine Section, p. 4].
3. "Portrait." *The Double Dealer*, III (June, 1922), 337 [reprinted in *Salmagundi*].
4. "Dying Gladiator." *The Double Dealer*, VII (Jan.-Feb., 1925), 85 [reprinted in *Salmagundi*].
5. "The Faun." *The Double Dealer*, VII (Apr., 1925), 148 [reprinted in *Salmagundi*].
6. "The Lilacs. To A and H , Royal Air Force, August, 1925." *The Double Dealer*, VII (June, 1925), 185-187 [reprinted in *Salmagundi* and in *A Green Bough*, I].
7. "I Will Not Weep for Youth." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 1 [uncollected].
8. "Knew I Love One." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 1 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, XXXIII].
9. "Twilight." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 1 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, X].
10. "Visions in Springs." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 1 [uncollected].
11. "Spring." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 2 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, XXXVI].
12. "April." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 2 [uncollected].
13. "To a Virgin." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 2 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, XXXIX].
14. "Winter Is Gone." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 2 [uncollected].
15. "My Epitaph." *Contempo*, I (Feb. 1, 1932), 2 [reprinted in *This Earth* and in *A Green Bough*, XLIV].
16. "The Race's Splendor." *The New Republic*, LXXIV (Apr. 12, 1933), 253 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, XXXVII].
17. "Night Piece." *The New Republic*, LXXIV (Apr. 12, 1933), 253 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, VII].
18. "Gray the Day." *The New Republic*, LXXIV (Apr. 12, 1933), 253 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, XXX].
19. "Over the World's Rim." *The New Republic*, LXXIV (Apr. 12, 1933), 253 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, XXVIII].

20. "The Ship of Night." *The New Republic*, LXXIV (Apr. 19, 1933), 272 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, XXXIV].
21. "Man Comes, Man Goes." *The New Republic*, LXXIV (May 3, 1933), 338 [reprinted in *A Green Bough*, VI and in *The New Republic Anthology: 1915-1935*, ed. Groff Conklin, New York, 1936, p. 451].
22. "A Child Looks from His Window." *Contempo*, II (May 25, 1932), 3 [uncollected].
23. "The Flowers That Died." *Contempo*, III (June 25, 1933), 1 [uncollected].

Following are the collections of Faulkner's poetry:

The Marble Faun, with a Preface by Phil Stone. The Four Seas Company, Boston, 1924.

Salmagundi, edited with a Preface by Paul Romaine. The Casanova Press, Milwaukee, 1932. A limited edition of 525 numbered copies. Besides the five poems, this book contains three essays by Faulkner from the *Double Dealer*: "New Orleans," "On Criticism," and "Verse Old and Nascent: A Pilgrimage"; the back cover contains a four-line poem by Hemingway, called "Ultimately," also from the *Double Dealer*.

This Earth. Equinox, New York, 1932. A limited edition of 1000 copies with drawings by Albert Heckman. An eight-line poem originally called "My Epitaph" when first published in *Contempo*; it was reprinted as the last poem in *A Green Bough*.

A Green Bough. Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, New York, 1933.

The following poems, all from *A Green Bough*, were reprinted in *Mississippi Verse*, Ed. Alice James, Chapel H., 1934, pp. 31-35: Hill.

1. "Mirror of Youth." *A Green Bough*, XVI.
2. "The Courtesan Is Dead." *A Green Bough*, XXXV.
3. "Green Is the Water." *A Green Bough*, XIX.
4. "If There Be Grief." *A Green Bough*, XLIV. (This is the same poem known as "My Epitaph" and "This Earth.")
5. "Here He Stands." *A Green Bough*, XX.
6. "Boy and Eagle." *A Green Bough*, XVIII.
7. "Mother and Child." *A Green Bough*, XIV.

Hero in *As I Lay Dying*

KENNETH B. SAWYER

To Robert Penn Warren, *As I Lay Dying* is a chronicle of "the heroic effort of the Bundren family to fulfill the promise to the dead mother, to take her body to Jefferson." This I think represents the tendency among even our keener critics to read Faulkner as if he were Hemingway. Despite a certain 'lightness' in the novel, the hard schema of serious structure is no less present than it is in the 'bigger' novels. But my quarrel is less with Mr. Warren's specific assertion than with the mode of reading it implies.

While there are moments—isolated actions—in *As I Lay Dying* which may be acceptably heroic to Warren, it seems unlikely that the quest considered as a whole could be so conceived. In fact, its force is relentless, brutal, and, finally, meaningless. Although the journey is accompanied by enormous hardships, although each member of the Bundren family suffers some significant loss, the wry final scene alone would seem to preclude the heroic.

. . . and then we see her behind him, carrying the other grip—a kind of duck-shaped woman all dressed up, with them kind of hard-looking eyes like she was daring ere a man to say nothing. And there we set watching them, with Dewey Dell's and Vardaman's mouth half open and half et bananas in their hands and her coming around from behind pa, looking at us like she dared ere a man. And then I see that the grip she was carrying was one of them little graphophones.

Addie Bundren has been in the ground for a matter of minutes, but in the mind of her family she may as well never have been born (I think it significant to note here that Jewel's response to this final episode is not revealed).

In fact, each successive event in the action seems relentlessly anti-heroic: the attitude of the slyly ineffectual, bathetic Anse, who sells the horse (Jewel's emancipation from Bundrenism), who casts Cash's broken leg with concrete, who takes by force Dewey Dell's abortion money (and who Mr. Warren admits ". . . is not typical of his family, by the way"); that of Cash, who, although he bears the pain of his injury with great fortitude, thinks rather of the workmanship of the coffin than of its function, asks first if his tools not his mother's body have been saved from the river; Dewey Dell's, whose secret motive for the

journey is to procure the medicine that will "fix her up"; that of Darl, who jumps from the foundering wagon to save himself regardless of what might happen to the coffin or to Cash, left to manage matters as best he can. Even the gruesome and comic episode of Vardaman vainly chasing the buzzards is only obliquely pathetic.

The journey, itself, with the stench of carrion outraging townsfolk and farmwives, vultures following the wagon, and Cash stoically lying atop the reeking coffin, is scarcely more than a caricature of the sacred mission. Yet if the heroism is inverse, there is an emergence of dignity both because of and despite the farce. Anse's refusal to use any team but his own; Cash's resistance to the pain of a broken and possibly gangrenous leg; Darl, who fired Gillespie's barn not out of madness, but to purify the body of Addie Bundren; Vardaman, fighting off the buzzards, boring holes in the coffin so his mother might breathe; even Dewey Dell, who carries along her cheap finery to wear at the burial, all become in some way better during the journey. Whatever regression there may be when the task is accomplished, each has discovered his moment of dignity.

Whereas Addie Bundren's death and subsequent burial clearly furnish a motive for the conflict, she seems little in the minds of the more articulate members of her family (I except Vardaman, who has suffered the shock of a child in the presence of death, and who, childlike, will retain the impact of his loss for the shortest period of time; who, in fact, at the close of the book is eating a banana and thinking of the train which is carrying off his brother Darl). Actually, the clan seems to respond only formally to her death, and the trip to Jefferson is meaningless but unchallenged ritual.

It is probably safe to say that Mr. Warren's defection and that of many of the august is largely in mode of reading: there is little in Faulkner that is not more complex than Warren's cursory analysis would imply. Where better to begin our search for the underlying 'relevance' of the novel than the opening paragraph?

Jewel and I come up from the field, following the path in single file. Although I am fifteen feet ahead of him, anyone watching from the cotton-house can see Jewel's frayed and broken straw hat a full head above my own.

Thus we encounter Jewel as the initial focus of the book. Nor is this all: the first chapter is, in large, devoted to images of Jewel. The second chapter, Cora Tull's narrative, shifts the focus to the dying Addie, but the next returns it to Jewel, and the fourth might be called

his soliloquy. In this section we witness the only occasion of Jewel's externalization; we view him 'from the inside outwards'—on all other encounters we see him through the eyes of Darl, Vardaman, or one of the others. Jewel, it seems, shares his mother's mistrust of symbols. And the passage, itself, is significant in that it is scarcely coherent, yet manages to sustain a greater emotional intensity than perhaps any other passage in the novel excepting Addie's single monologue. One is forced to concede the pure rhetoric of much of the narrative material, as effective as it might be, but the savage sincerity of Jewel's soliloquy is unquestionable.

It would be just me and her on a high hill and me rolling the rocks down the hill at their faces, picking them up and throwing them down the hill, faces and teeth and all by God until she was quiet and not that goddamn adze going One lick less. One lick less and we could be quiet.

Not only do we discover Jewel as the initial focus of the book, but we find him regarded more frequently and by a greater number of people than any other figure. Although Addie Bundren, dead or living, is the motive force, Jewel is that single person who achieves what might be called tragic proportions.

The largest segment of the several narratives which comprise *As I Lay Dying* is devoted to considerations of Jewel from different aspects, all external. Only the prophetic Darl senses the truth about him: "Your mother is a horse, but who was your father, Jewel?" Just how significant this is the reader learns only when he reaches Addie's chapter: Jewel is not Anse's son, he is her son by another man; a child born of love and, as she sees it, of sin; made more beautiful to her because born of sin. He is her guilt, or as she, herself, says: "He is my cross, and he will be my salvation."

And the speech that follows is probably the important passage in the book:

He will save me from the water and from the fire. Even though I have laid down my life, he will save me.

The italics are mine, but the prophesy is Addie's; thus does Faulkner reveal the essential meaning of the journey (and Jewel's motivation: with that certain intuition—greater than Darl's—reserved for Faulknerian heroes, he senses and accepts his mission as Addie Bundren's saviour).

The question naturally arises: precisely what constitutes her salvation? I should like to suggest that it is her ultimate escape from Bund-

renism; from the trickery of words (Anse); love ("... that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack; that when the right time came, you wouldn't need a word for that any more than for pride or fear"). Her salvation lay in a return to her dead—to the silent ones—in Jefferson.

(Anse says) "Well, I got a little property. I'm forehanded; I got a good honest name. I know how town folk are, but maybe when they talk to me . . ."

"They might listen," I said. "But they'll be hard to talk to."

He was watching my face. "They're in the cemetery."

"But your living kin," he said. "They'll be different."

"Will they?" I said. "I don't know. I never had any other kind."

Addie Bundren's salvation was, therefore, "to stay dead a long time" among her own people, the undeceiving silent. And for this Jewel is the agent. "He will save me from the water and from the fire. Even though I have laid down my life he will save me."

With this recognized, Faulkner's allotment of a single soliloquy to Jewel becomes understandable, as does the fact that a great part of the descriptive matter is devoted to his behavior. What is more, certain questions concerning his actions are answered (not to mention the name, Jewel, which assumes added significance): his silence in contrast to the rhetoric of his family; his quiet acceptance of the trade of his horse—we had expected reaction here; the nature of his pride. It is also significant that after the burial he is no longer central to the events of the novel; he begins to fade into the context of the family. Addie Bundren disappears into the earth; Jewel disappears into his surroundings. His mission is the story, and it is finished.

An Interview with Faulkner

A. M. DOMINICIS

Translated from the Rome weekly *La Fiera Letteraria*, Feb. 14, 1954, by Elizabeth Nissen, University of Minnesota.

The hotel room in which Mr. Faulkner receives me has none of the atmosphere of his books. To recreate it I tell him about the famous fratricides which took place in 1555 among the members of the Mattei family in the very house where he was welcomed last night by personalities of the Roman cultural set and of the American Embassy.

An expression of delighted curiosity appears on Faulkner's finely drawn features.

"There must be many stories like that in Rome."

"In Rome and elsewhere in Italy, for centuries the scene of more or less glorious dominations."

Now it was my turn to be delighted. What would Faulkner have written if he had been born in Italy?

Reserved and silent he smokes his pipe. There are questions I want to ask but I know that he doesn't care for publicity, for intellectuals and men of letters and that he is indifferent to what his readers think of his books.

"I know that your last book is about to appear."

"Yes, in September. I have worked on it about nine years."

"Is it a story of the imaginary county of Yoknapatawpha?"

"No, it has nothing to do with Yoknapatawpha. It is laid in France at the end of the first World War. It is a fable based on the story of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection."

"I should like to have you tell me the aim of this book."

"How can I tell you about its aim when you don't know the book? And how can I tell you about the book when it has taken me nine years to write it? Well, wait, let's see."

He speaks rapidly in a deep low voice with a slight southern accent.

The main protagonist is the Unknown Soldier. He is the symbol of Christ who if he had been born now would have been crucified again (just the same.)

There are three characters who represent the trinity of the human conscience. The society in which they live is corrupt. The first character refuses to accept evil and in so doing refuses himself and commits suicide. The second one accepts evil but does nothing about it. The third is aware of evil and does something.

At the end of the book the third character is a victim of the mob. A ceremony in honor of the Unknown Soldier is interrupted. The dying man is on the muddy ground and spitting blood. Over him is the triumphal arch. "Let's kill him," shouts the mob. "He's already dead," says someone.

The man in the mud answers: "I shall never die."

Mentally I search in Faulkner's books for a current towards a greater humanity and a closer sense of responsibility, from *Light in*

August to Absalom Absalom to Intruder in the Dust. Cheek, the protagonist of *Intruder in the Dust* involved in a suit against a negro realizes in the course of a slow inner maturing, speeded up by the seriousness of the events, that the negro problem is not one of race but of human beings. I ask Faulkner if there is in this direction a way out for what has been called his "chaotic pessimism."

He doesn't answer right away. The knotty hands which can use the pen and the axe play with a match box. By this pause he makes me sense that a book is a book as a picture is a picture, and truth remains as ever always on the threshold.

"The primary duty of the artist is to say something and to use for this end whatever instrument he considers the best. There is not time to put personal "credos" in books. The artist says only what at that given moment seems to him important to say."

I want to know why he writes. Sherwood Anderson, Faulkner's friend when Faulkner wrote *Soldier's Pay* and lived like a bohemian in New Orleans, used to complain of the solitude of the American artist and wrote in order to communicate.

"Writers have private illusions at the origin of their books. I intend my writing as the phrase which appeared all over on the walls during the last war (in America) "Kilroy was here!" Kilroy has been here. I write to say No to death."

Now even in this impersonal hotel room it is not difficult to perceive the ghost of Quentin Compson who smashed his watch on the banks of the Charles. To stop Time, rich Time which even in the present contains the past as well seems to be the aspiration of all Faulkner's heroes. He himself like his Compsons and his Sartorises has the responsibility and the obsession of a glorious past whose harmony was shattered by an act of violence. At the start of the colonization of the South by the whites is an act of violence; an act of violence in 1839 marks the beginning of his greatgrandfather's career. In the mystic scheme of justification of this Southerner (who is born of the South to witness its decadence) the land assumes an heroic role. It is the land which avenges itself on the Sartorises causing them to be tricked surpassed by the Northerners and the Snopeses; it is the land which avenges itself on the Snopeses making them dry and impotent men and women. It is an introverted, accusing, violent puritanism.

"Why does violence play such a big role in your books?"

"It is the most effective instrument I find. For everything we do we

need an instrument. At times we use our hands with tenderness, at times the knife, but at times we need a hammer. We always select the instrument that seems the best."

I asked him what his feelings were when in 1926, after a volume of verse, he published his first novel *Soldier's Pay*.

"Not as good as I wanted them to be. This is why I have kept on writing one book after the other trying to do better each time. I don't complain about solitude. One has to be alone to accomplish anything. One has to go through the agony. Damn it! This isn't going well. I have to begin again . . ."

He spoke jerkily, with feeling and with an almost metallic clarity. He stopped halfway. Now he adds with a smile while putting the pipe down on the table and pulling from his pocket a pack of cigarettes:

"Why not try something simpler, like chopping wood or digging ditches?"

We pass on to the subject of regional culture in the United States. I tell him that coming from Europe, America has given me, in spite of New England, the South and the West, a painful sense of uniformity and standardization.

"America is too big a country for a single culture. New York represents America only to Europeans. The people whom one meets in the states on the Atlantic seaboard are naturally uniform because they have forsworn the responsibility of belonging to their region of origin."

I ask him if he has any preferences in music.

"Music makes me nervous. I don't listen to it at all."

"Do you sympathize with any philosophical trend?"

"No interest, no ties. I know nothing about philosophy. I have gone to school and didn't like it. I have never taken a degree. After a while I stopped going because it was a waste of time."

I ask him his opinion about current literary output.

"I am a farmer and not a man of letters. I am not interested in literature. I write because I like to."

Although it is winter and we haven't seen the sun even in Rome for three weeks, Faulkner's face is slightly tanned and finely wrinkled. It is the archaic and perennial tan of one who spends his time in the open. And in truth his whole work seems to have matured far from University classrooms and cultural circles, bound to a land where in every tree is present the memory of the seed from which it germinated; in every individual is present and operating a tradition, perhaps no more

than a chain of events, from which the blood of his veins is derived: so in the consciousness of this man is present and living a past happy life which in his native South renders more poignant its decadence now that its former epic air has died away about him, although there remains not an echo of it in the sometimes magnificent prose with which he has traced in his novels its progressive descent from one generation to another.

As he bids me goodbye, he draws from his trouser pocket a red cotton handkerchief. A passerby could easily take him for a peace loving country gentleman.

A Note on the Ordonnance of *The Sound and the Fury*

Malcolm Cowley has said that the four sections of *The Sound and the Fury* are perhaps not "presented in the most effective order." One answer to Cowley has been presented by Lawrence Bowling in an article on the technique of *The Sound and the Fury*. Bowling points out that Benjy's section must appear first because "From one point of view it is the whole novel in miniature. It presents all the main characters in situations which foreshadow the main action."

A Franco-American critic, Maurice-Edgar Coindreau, sees the composition of *The Sound and the Fury* as essentially musical. "One thinks of those impressionist compositions, mysterious and disordered on the first hearing, but rigorously ordered under their apparent confusion." According to this view, Faulkner employs the system of themes, and unity is obtained with the aid of two equally effective elements: the cries of Benjy and the noble figure of Dilsey.

But there is yet another principle of organization which, as far as I know, has not yet been commented on. If we may distinguish between the narrative structure (or present action) and the dream structure (or past action as contained in the flashback), a certain pattern becomes apparent.

In Benjy's section, there is little narrative structure, a bare minimum. In Quentin's section, there is more narrative structure, while in Jason's section there is a strong narrative base. This is to say that present time becomes increasingly important as the book moves toward the end. The dream structure controls Benjy's section almost completely. In Quentin's section this element is a bit less strong, while in Jason's

section it is least important and in the last section it disappears completely. In the following chart we may observe the relation between the two structures.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE	DREAM STRUCTURE
SECTION 1: little present action	flashback predominates
SECTION 2: more present action	less flashback
SECTION 3: present action predominates	little flashback
SECTION 4: complete present action	flashback disappears

From this chart it is possible to perceive two opposed structures moving through the book: the narrative beginning weakly, becoming stronger as it moves through the book until it stands alone at the end; and the other movement of the dream, which strongly predominates at the beginning but becomes weaker as it moves through the book until it disappears in the end. Obviously, this progression would be disturbed if any of the sections were rearranged.

We must note, also, that we read *The Sound and the Fury* in exactly the same way that we find out about life. That is, we learn about the Compsons in the same way we might learn about any family. For example, in the first section, on April 7, we see Quentin run away. It is only in the third section that we learn the motive, and not until the fourth section do we learn of the effect on the family. If the book were arranged in chronological order, we would first learn the motive, then we would see Quentin leave and then we would see the discovery of her flight. But in life we do not have handy a narrator, someone to comment and explain, and life comes to us in meaningless chunks that we are able to classify and explain to ourselves only much later. Thus Faulkner, instead of stating for use the Compson situation, has rendered it for our judgement, and rendered it in a way that corresponds to the way in which life appears to us.

The Sound and the Fury is an example of what Mark Schorer calls "achieved content" or art, because Faulkner has used technique to discover, explore and develop his subject, to convey its meaning, and finally, to evaluate it.

What then, is the meaning that his technique has conveyed? At least one subject is the sense of time and an absence of that sense. In Benjy's section the important thing is remembrance—time past. In Quentin's section we have conveyed to us the sense of time the killer as it swoops Quentin toward a future which he will not face. In Jason's section the important thing is the failure to remember. But in Dilsey's section we can see the results of Faulkner's evaluation of his material.

As a result of this evaluation Faulkner there makes explicit the qualities that allow Dilsey to define herself as human: "abnegation" and "immolation."

E.B.L.

Some Remarks on *A Fable*

The following is a excerpt, slightly modified, from a review appearing in *Folio*, University of Indiana literary publication.

In *A Fable*, Faulkner displays uneasiness in his treatment of locale and subject and, perhaps more important, in his conception. It is significant, for example, that he had to choose World War I rather than any other conflict for his anti-war statement. One explanation that immediately offers itself is that it was this war with which Faulkner had some first-hand experience. This may be so, but its use must be justified by a sure control of the material. Faulkner's remoteness from the material, and his essential uneasiness about a locale and affairs so far removed from Yoknapatawpha is revealed, however, by his need to refer back to Mississippi again and again ("Listen to this. It happened in America, at a remote place called by an Indian name I think: Mississippi:") and in the fact that the interpolated short story, "Notes on a Horse Thief," is by far the liveliest section of the book. A second and more provocative explanation may lie in another direction.

Faulkner's familiarly expert treatment of violence (the nightmare clarity of the scene in which General Gragnon is executed is especially compelling) strikes one as curiously out of tone in this religious, pacifist, allegory. If we ask whether this is not merely old Faulkerian wine in a new bottle we have begun to comprehend a basic confusion in the conception of the book. Then, social and cultural considerations offer a plausible explanation of Faulkner's need to go back to the first World War for his setting, and finally, for the failure of the attempt.

No writers have emerged from World War II who echo Dos Passos', Cummings', and Hemingway's intense disillusionment with Power and the institution of war. To be sure, Mailer and Shaw and Jones have displayed disgust, horror, outrage, but not their predecessors' sense of personal betrayal. The American writers maturing before the first war were part of the last generation to believe in the Enlightenment, in a cosmopolitan Europe, in the purely *extraneous* nature of violence. The writers coming to maturity since 1931 and Manchuria, however, have

had to accomodate themselves to an entirely different conception of violence. And not the least of their equipment in this process of accomodation has come from the work of William Faulkner. One of the ways in which Faulkner has been meaningful for this generation is in his realization that violence is part of man's equipment, for good or ill. The attempt, therefore, to obliterate three decades of anguish by being in and of two generations and juggling two sensibilities simultaneously is foredoomed to creak, crack, and fail.

J.C.

Communications

WE HAVE RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING COMMUNICATION:

In his essay in *English Institute Essays*, 1952, Cleanth Brooks attacks at length our contention (in our book, 1951) that primitivism is an important element in the works of Faulkner. Brooks submits that he finds little or no primitivism in those works, and then turns his guns on us, first, by quoting, after somewhat distorting, the following sentence from our book: "Again, as we would expect in a primitivist, Faulkner usually delineates our civilized world in a very unflattering fashion—as a wasteland filled with undersexed or oversexed creatures." By omitting "Again" and capitalizing the *a* in "as," Brooks distorts this statement by us, which is one in a series of statements pointing out characteristics which in their totality would indicate the importance of primitivism in Faulkner's works; we nowhere imply that any one of these characteristics alone would make Faulkner a primitivist. After thus somewhat inaccurately quoting the above sentence by us, Brooks says that it indicates on our part "a conclusion . . . which would make a primitivist of T. S. Eliot, not to mention Jonathan Swift."

In the very next sentence Brooks quotes our statement about the "primitive stoicism of the Negro" which Faulkner opposes to the ills of our civilization. In the following sentence Brooks says: "But stoicism has little to do with primitivism—historically stoicism [*sic* for lower case] is a late and sophisticated cult which made its appearance in a late and waning civilization and it has in any case no relation to the 'noble savage' concept." Brooks says this in spite of the fact, apparently unknown to him, that Lovejoy and Boas, to whom along with other outstanding scholars on this subject we refer repeatedly, devote a whole

footnote on the very page from which he quoted this sentence about Ike should have corrected Brooks on this point, this footnote reading as follows:

This action [Ike's foregoing his land and wife as expiation for the above mentioned sins of others] is somewhat analogous to the primitive idea of "reversal" or "inversion," a method of purification. Many primitive peoples believe that the effects of an evil action can only be nullified by a counteraction which is equal and opposite in force. See Lucien Levy-Bruhl, *Primitives and the Supernatural*, 380 ff.

Concerning our next sentence, in which we say, "Voluntarily he [Ike] embraces poverty by rejecting his plantation, and his life from this point on becomes vaguely Christlike," Brooks has this to say, "The mention of Christ really tears it. If Christ is a primitivist, then the term can mean almost anything . . ." It is hard to see how Brooks can interpret our saying that Ike "becomes vaguely Christlike" to mean that we call Christ a primitivist (especially since he has just quoted our qualifying adverb attached to "Christlike"). Surely the quality of vicarious expiation, which is shared by Christ and Ike and which we have clearly established in the reference to Levy-Bruhl as analogous to a phase of hard primitivism, gives us sufficient reason for our qualified comparison, especially in view of Ike's comparison (quoted by us on the same page) of his occupation to that of Christ. And concerning the need for vicarious expiation, the connection of which with primitivism Brooks denies, Lovejoy and Boas are once more helpful:

Some recent expounders—and assailants—of (modern) primitivism have supposed it to imply, or to be closely connected with, the belief in the 'natural goodness of man.' The opposite is nearer the truth. Chronological primitivism, except in its morally irrelevant Hesiodic form, has always necessarily implied what may, in theological language, be called a Doctrine of the Fall. For the state of nature did not endure. Man is good 'by nature' in the sense that he was so originally. But for his lapse from his primeval simplicity and innocence some propensity latent in his own constitution must have been responsible . . .

We are not interested in attacking Mr. Brooks; we are simply puzzled by his vehement and lengthy opposition, not to the qualities which we find in *The Sound and the Fury* and elsewhere in Faulkner (his own basic conclusions differ very little from ours), but to our calling a considerable portion of those qualities primarily primitivistic.

HARRY MODEAN CAMPBELL
University of Mississippi

and RUEL S. FOSTER
University of West Virginia

chapter of their *Documentary History of Primitivism* to explaining the importance of "Stoic Primitivism." The Stoics, according to this chapter, both admired the simple virtues, including endurance, of primitive peoples and themselves practiced these virtues. Surely, then, it is not amiss for us to characterize the simple, virtuous, close-to-nature endurance of the Negro as "primitive stoicism" (of course, for "stoicism" we use lower case for obvious purposes of distinction, which Brooks blurs by failing to capitalize the initial *s* in historical Stoicism). And in answer to Brook's statement in the above quoted sentence that "it [stoicism] has in any case no relation to the 'noble savage' concept," the following quotation from Lovejoy and Boas (pp. 10-11) seems appropriate:

. . . the 'noble savages' *par excellence*, in the later primitivism of the classical period—the Scythians and the Getae, and later the Germans—were rude hardy fellows to whom 'Nature' was no gentle or indulgent mother . . . they were extolled for the fewness of their desires and their consequent indifference to the luxuries and even the comforts of civilized life. The Cynics and Stoics were the principal promoters of primitivism in antiquity . . .

In the very next paragraph Brooks denies that the lives of Sam Fathers and Isaac McCaslin could be used as illustrations of primitivistic virtues *because*, says Brooks, "Sam Fathers is a tutor and Isaac McCaslin wins to his mastery of himself by a long and difficult discipline, by renunciation and abnegation." But the lives of Sam Fathers and Isaac McCaslin are perfect examples of what we analyze as "hard primitivism," (p. 149), the adjective "hard" borrowed from Lovejoy and Boas, who say further (pp. 10, 11):

The child of nature has probably, as our texts will show, more frequently been held up as a model by the ethical rigorists . . . than by the amorlists and antinomians . . . primitivism has been throughout history a not less marked tendency among the preachers of an ethics of renunciation, of austerity, of self-discipline.

Brooks is next incensed at the following sentence of ours:

And Ike, in a sense, though he doesn't realize this consciously, becomes a scapegoat: the sins of the Southern whites (private ownership, slavery) and of his bloodline (Old Carothers McCaslin's incest) are assumed by him and his life becomes a means of expiating them.

Says Brooks: "The concept of 'nature as norm' has no room for sin and expiation—least of all for a concept of vicarious expiation." But our

Mercier, Vivian, "A Search For Universality That Led Too Far From Home," *The Commonweal*, Vol. LX, No. 18, August 6, 1954.

Faulkner is most successful in achieving universality when he deals with the people of Jefferson, Mississippi. When he leaves Faulkner territory" he fails. *A Fable* does not gain universality by its relation to the Christ story or its international cast of characters; on the contrary, those brief sections of the novel which take place in the South are more vital than the remainder of the book.

The central theme of *A Fable* is "man's age-long aspiration to end war forever". Its message is nothing more than a "hodge-podge of clichés". The analogies between the Christ story and Faulkner's tale of the Corporal are listed.

N.G.

Podhoretz, Norman, "William Faulkner and the Problem of War; His Fable of Faith," *Commentary*, Vol. 18, No. 3, September, 1954, pp. 227-232.

Faulkner's new novel is "dull", "tortured", and "pretentious". It is easier to see today that Faulkner is really a simple man, rather than the complex thinker his prose style would seem to indicate. He has found it impossible to face reality, and has attempted to escape the complicated world and its politics. Faulkner has lost touch with contemporary experience. In *A Fable* he concerns himself with "irrelevant religiosity," ignoring the drama being enacted in our real world. His latest book presents an empty affirmation of man, using the gospels as a source because he sees them as the greatest tribute to man ever conceived. But Faulkner is unsure in his statement of "values"; the explicit way in which his affirmation is presented is indicative of his lack of sureness. *A Fable* marks the end of an era: Faulkner, Hemingway, and Dos were the representatives of the world of the 20's and 30's. Today they already seem to be archaic.

N.G.

Pritchett, "Time Frozen," *Partisan Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1954, pp. 557-561.

"Faulkner has . . . the myth-makers sense of the different ways in which experience is repetitive and over" and, as a result, makes his novels historical in a broad sense. In *A Fable*, history moves beyond Yoknapatawpha to Europe of World War I.

The military aspect in *A Fable* makes apparent Faulkner's love of ritual and gives him, also, the opportunity to explore the conflict between "moral claims . . . and the anguish of men . . . forced to set St. Paul against Christ."

Because of the incantatory nature of his prose, all moments tend to have the same intensity and the major difficulty in *A Fable*

Notes and Comments

This issue combines the Summer and Fall issues of *Faulkner Studies*. Beginning with this issue, *Faulkner Studies* has a new staff. You will find their names on the masthead. When they took over, they agreed among themselves that the readers might be interested in essays on other writers. In the Winter issue they will print two of the stories which were omitted from *Mirrors of Chartres Street*, some articles on Faulkner, and one essay dealing with some writer other than Faulkner. They hope this plan will meet with your approval, and invite you to express your opinion.

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Faulkner must be judged, not by comparison with other and dissimilar novelists, but by his own standards as a "poetic novelist", in the tradition of Flaubert, Joyce, and Lawrence. Seen in this light, many of the unnecessary digressions within individual pieces would be justifiable. In his novels the emphasis falls on the dramatic and poetic, rather than on "merely intellectual realization," and therefore the distortions in his work "suggest some distortion of the spirit".

His elegiac and tragi-comic view takes into account what he regards as the disintegration "of middle class wisdom on which James and George Eliot drew so heavily." If this is true, and if it is also true that Faulkner writes, as a Southerner, at a moment when the South is passing into legend before his eyes, then the view of him as "a fabulous *naif*" is no longer possible. Rather, he is quite professional and, for instance, takes real care to match his character's speech to their social status. As in *Light in August*, for example, he reveals himself to be both inventive and realistically moral.

The novels seem to suggest that suffering is "protean and universal" and that "the possibilities of intellectual or spiritual heroism are relatively few." Therefore his novels become novels of the mind because "subsistent realities, such as honor, courtesy, fidelity, integrity and love are embodied and recognized only in action."

Because he has such a grasp on "the principles of modern ideologies," Faulkner is able to grasp them poetically rather than intellectually and therefore able to write novels "which are elegiac in the larger perspective."

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is the conflict "between idiosyncracies of regional genius and a nostalgia for a contemporary means of dealing with a universal situation."

S.E.

Rosenfeld, Isaac, "On The Noble Novelist", *New Republic*, Vol. 127, No. 5, August 4, 1952, p. 18-19.

This is a review of Irving Howe's book *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*. As a forerunner in its field, Howe's book is a glancing treatment of the existing Faulkner criticism. In his attempt at scope and amplitude, Howe has sacrificed depth and concentration of analysis. However, Rosenfeld lauds the author for the sense of proportion and for the empirical tone of his work.

G.J.G.

Goellner, Jack Gordon, "A Closer Look At *As I Lay Dying*," *Perspective*, Vol. VII, No. 1, Spring, 1954, pp. 42-54.

This is an attempt to place *As I Lay Dying* within what Malcolm Cowley calls Faulkner's "legend of the South." Mr. Goellner suggests that the meaning of the book is not to be found in an analysis as tragedy, but rather "within the psychology of the Bundren kinships." This article contains a further amplification of the family interrelationships and reveals Addie as the cohesive force in the family even after death.

G.J.G.

Baker, Carlos, "Cry Enough," *The Nation*, Vol. 179, No. 6, Aug. 7, 1954, pp. 115-117.

The novel's force is derived from Faulkner's modern and ironic version of the Christ legend. Images and events throughout the novel represent variously the Last Supper, the Judas figure, Mary-Martha-Magdelene. The use of this theme is not surprising since all Faulkner's best work—*As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, *Absalom*, *Absalom*—revolve about Biblical themes and legends.

While Faulkner's *Fable* and Joyce's *Ulysses* differ in many respects, they are alike insofar as both are "moral by intent, ironic in execution." Both rely on legend and both are longer than need be, over-populated by secondary characters, rhetorically overingenious, and unnecessarily complicated or obscure.

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